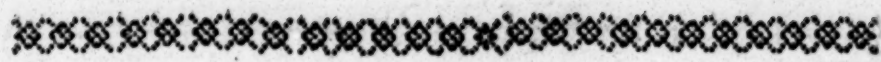
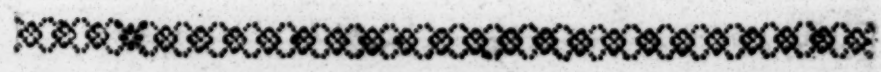
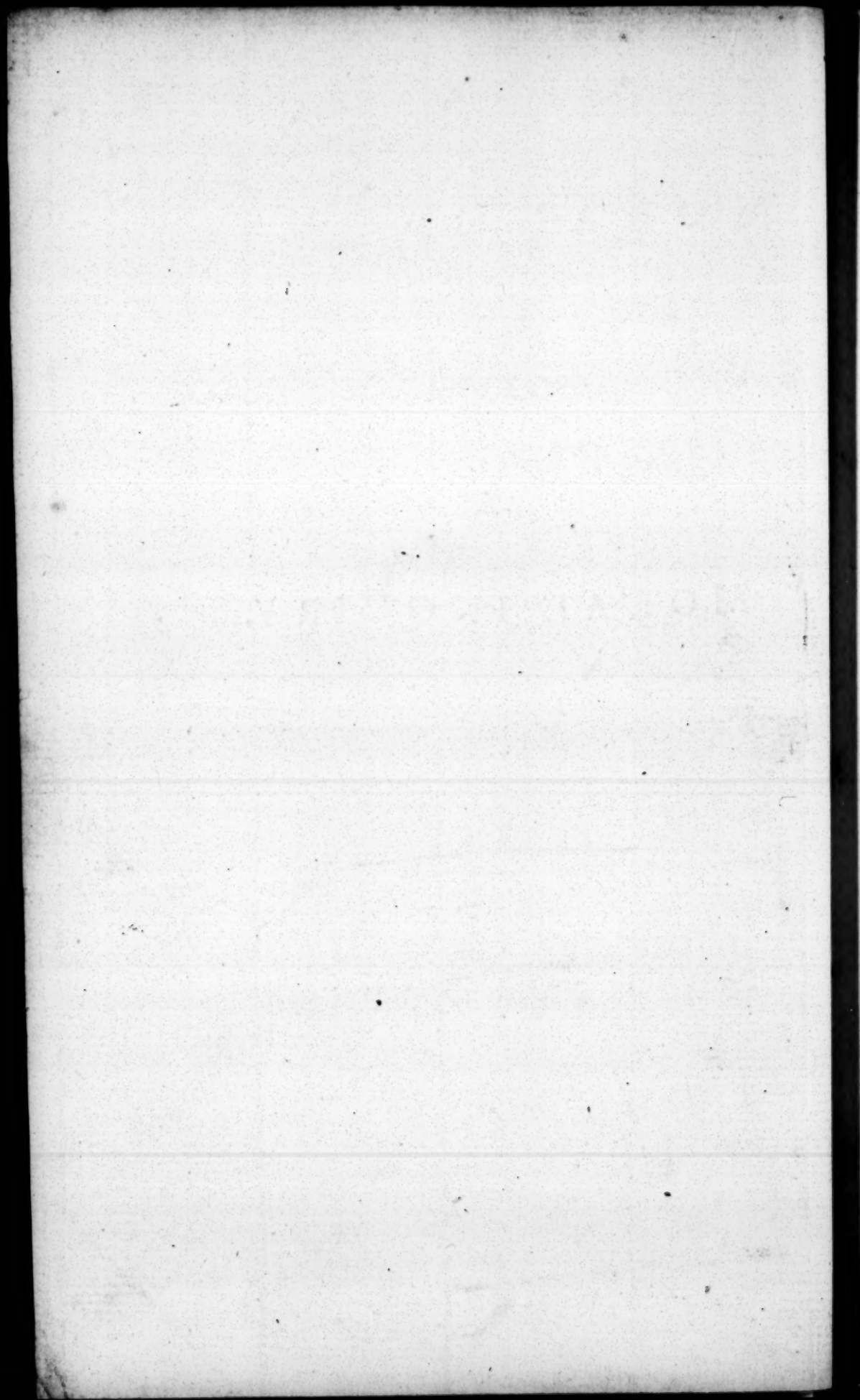


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A
MORAL INQUIRY.





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M O R A L I N Q U I R Y
I N T O T H E
N A T U R A L W O R T H
A N D
D I G N I T Y o f M A N.

By G. S T A Y L E Y, Comedian.

The proper study of mankind is Man.
And all our knowledge is—ourselves to know.

POPE'S ETHICS.

E D I N B U R G H:

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M O R A L I N Q U I R Y.

TH E holy psalmist, as if particularly desirous to awaken and enforce man to a self-examination into his nature and consequence, hath, repeatedly, proposed to his moral consideration the greatest question that ever was asked: "LORD, What is man, that THOU hast such respect unto him? or the son of man, that THOU so regardest him *?" The bare interrogation confers on man the highest honour he is capable of receiving; the acknowledged friendship of his GOD: and the answer, on a right understanding, will furnish him with all the knowledge he has occasion to possess, *the knowledge of himself*. But then it will require to be properly and fully discussed, and explained;

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* Psalm CXLIV. 3.

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plained; or that glorious and useful information, which might otherwise be deduced from it, will be lost in the most mortifying error. For a common and superficial reading of the question, instead of firing the soul into a blaze of gratitude, for such marvellous condescension in ALMIGHTY goodness, is apt to mislead our understanding, by filling our minds with a false idea of our own littleness. And which reflection, for want of a true and perfect knowledge of our nature, is very often, in religious declamation, carried into downright scandal and abuse; and that by way of magnifying the DEITY, and representing to man a lively picture of himself. Is then the ALMIGHTY so limited and dependent in His exalted EMINENCE, that man's being trampled through the earth would raise the GODHEAD higher into the heavens? No. For, as the MAKER of all things is INFINITE in his attributes, the distance between HIM and His creature will appear equally great and wonderful; or,
to

A MORAL INQUIRY. 7

to a just speculation, incomparably more so, though we should do the justice to *humanity*, to place it in that honourable point of view, which, we hope, a moral inquiry into the natural worth and dignity of man shall prove it intitled to. For, instead of putting him out of conceit with himself, by decrying his *nature*, we shall, contrary to general custom, rather endeavour to inspire him with an high, but a just idea of his true worth and importance; as a much better method, in our humble opinion, of filling his mind with noble sentiments, and exciting that grateful obedience, and manly respect, which he owes both his MAKER and himself. For neither Saint David, in the words just quoted, nor any other of the sacred writers, would presume to turn the workmanship of HEAVEN into ridicule and contempt; and therefore, whenever the scripture speaks slightly of man, that *worm of dust*, and *grass of the field*, it is only to be understood
with

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with respect of the DEITY, and as he stands opposed to INFINITE PERFECTION. In all other respects, it treats him as a being, *fearfully and wonderfully made!* Whom GOD created but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour! A creature who partakes the power and glory of OMNIPOTENCE; for in HIM we live, and move, and have our being; nay, are even commanded to follow HIS example, and be holy as HE is holy. A divine injunction, which never would have been imposed on man, had the eye of ALMIGHTY creation beheld him in a despicable light.

THERE is no reason, which I can see, why man must be run down to make him humble; nay, perhaps, it may rather produce the contrary effect, and render him more haughty and aspiring; as generous souls struggle most to rise, the more they are depressed. Nay, doth not common observation experience a thousand daily instances of modesty and affability in our superiors,

superiors, and the utmost arrogance and conceit in those beneath us? So that, it is not only injustice done our *nature*, but a labour lost, to attempt, by railing at *humanity*, to induce men to entertain a mean opinion of themselves; or, suppose they did, humility would not be the consequence. For a man may be sensible of his worthlessness, and yet be as proud as Beelzebub. No: It is the *noble* soul, joined to a thorough *knowledge of ourselves*, which produceth humility: Little minds are always proud. Nay more, ingratitude, avarice, envy, revenge, and almost all the vices incident to *humanity*, are the result, the infallible signs and consequence of a little mind. And therefore, to persuade man into a mean opinion of himself, would rather be attended with ill than good effect. Nay, even humility itself, if thus degenerated, (it may, with propriety, be termed so,) is, in little minds, rather abjectness than virtue. Add to all which; the more you endeavour to lessen a man in his own estimation, the more,

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in his opinion, you lessen his obligation to his MAKER; and consequently weaken his acknowledgments. Whereas, shew a man what a *noble* being he is, and what glorious honours are designed him; his future emoluments, his Christian expectation and advantage, convince him of his full value, and make him set a just price on himself; and his gratitude will rise in proportion to the debt, and sin appear more scandalous, as you magnify his *nature*!

To which end, the whole business of the following discourse shall be, To shew man the necessity and advantage of *knowing himself*; and without which he can never support his exalted station, with suitable dignity, or give a satisfactory answer to the demand in question: LORD, When I consider THY heavens, the work of THY fingers, the moon and the stars which THOU hast ordained: What is man that THOU art mindful of him? and the son of man that THOU visitest him *?

Know

* Psalm VIII. 3. 4.

II A MORAL INQUIRY.

Know thyself, though the most concise, and seemingly most easy, is, perhaps, the hardest lesson that ever was delivered the children of men. More difficult, perhaps, than for the blind to cleanse their eyes of beams, or the physician to cure himself; and yet, as necessary as difficult. No prejudice being equal to one in favour of ourselves, or any mistake half so dangerous; and therefore, as self-conquest is the greatest victory, so self-knowledge is the greatest, that is, the most beneficial wisdom. So highly were these two words, "*Know thyself*," revered by the Heathen Mythologists, that they caused them, like the ten commandments of Moses, to be written on a table of stone, and prefixed to the temple of Wisdom. They are a Bible in themselves, and comprehend all the morals of virtue and humanity; and, though a full possession of this knowledge cannot always enforce a performance of our duty; yet does it never fail, in the strongest terms, to point out the obligation; that is, whatever the laws of God or
nature

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nature command to be done. Man's knowledge of himself gives a reason for doing it. Love the LORD with all thy heart and strength, faith the first and great commandment. Why, asketh man? because, answereth self-knowledge, you cannot do less for your MAKER and PRESERVER. Thus self-knowledge becomes the great expofitor of GOD's holy word; and man might as well think of failing round the globe, without the help of a compass, as attempt to read the scriptures without this knowledge of himself: It is the grand regulator of all human conduct and proceedings; without which, it is impossible for any one to keep due time or motion; he must run retrograde, and vary: For man, like the earth he stands on, has his proper circle or sphere of movement assigned him; to step out of which, whether by ascension or descension; that is, whether by meanness or presumption; is equal error and destruction. The man struſt dead for imitating Jove's thunder, did not soar higher above his sphere, than
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he who is guilty of uncleanness, sinks himself beneath it. But sure, the corruption of individuals is no reproach to the whole species, much less to *human nature* itself: Otherwise, the fall of Lucifer and his friends, would, by a parity of argument, throw equal, if not superior, censure and disgrace on all the angelic inhabitants of heaven. But that is not the case; and therefore, it is as certain, that man may speak too lowly of himself, as it is impossible for him to think too highly of his MAKER. Nor can I see, how the CREATOR's glory is advanced by a defamation of his creature. Can a diminutive description of a performance magnify the reputation of the artist? as well might we call the temple of Solomon a rustic hovel, and think we paid the architect who raised it a great compliment. On the contrary, the more praise, within the bounds of modest justice, we allow the creature, the greater honour we acknowledge due to the CREATOR. Greater the work, greater the hand which formed it:

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More

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More noble the subject, more glorious the monarch ! And consequently, it is not only inhuman, but profane, to depreciate and vilify an immortal production, which ALMIGHTY wisdom and power have taken such unwearied pains about ! And, though exaltation be promised him who humbleth himself ; yet is there great difference between humility and debasement. Nor is it either divine command, or human duty, that man should think little, but *rightly*, of himself.

It is certain, that man, compared to the DEITY, is, if possible, much less than nothing : And therefore, when I meditate the glorious ATTRIBUTES and PERFECTIONS of the GODHEAD ! when I contemplate the effulgent MAJESTY of heaven ! enthroned in His ineffable purity and state ! And drop on a sudden into myself ; I am constrained to exclaim with the Centurion : LORD, I am not worthy THOU shouldest enter under my roof. What ! *Almighty glory ! Sovereign of eternity !*

nity ! and MAKER of all things ! pay me
 a visit ! the poor corrupted dust of a
 dark obscure corner ! Incredible truth !
 Goodness almost as infinite in condescen-
 sion, as HIMSELF is infinite in height !
 And what, were it not my duty to believe,
 would even be profaneness to imagine.
 But then, when I reflect what mighty
 things have been done for me ! My immor-
 tal expectations, and heavenly reverfions !
 How divinely favoured and allied ! When
 I trace my origin, from the immediate
 offspring of the great JEHOVAH ! a cho-
 sen vessel of His own created matter !
 Formed by His own right hand, and a-
 nimated with a beam of His own im-
 mortal SPIRIT ! When, with a mental
 retrospect, I look back into paradise, and
 there behold my first progenitors in friend-
 ly walk and converse with their GOD !
 While all creation, by DIVINE command,
 seem to bow obedient to their earthly
 lord ! When I see angels and archangels
 descending on a thousand messages from
 heaven to man ; and even GOD HIMSELF !
the

the LORD of hosts ! Fighting the battles,
 and avenging the wrongs of my fore-
 fathers ! When I take a survey of hu-
 man productions and discoveries ; from
 the stately bark, which, like the proud le-
 viathan, takes its pastime in the deep,
 down to the rein and bit, which tame and
 break the fiery steed to the will and use
 of man ! From the bright tube, which
 pierces through the clouds, down to the
 dark combustible, which rends the rock !
 the liberal art ! the philosophic lore ! the
 depth of science ! the numberless useful !
 learned ! graceful acquirements ! which lie
 within the reach of man : From the po-
 lished scholar who treads a court, down
 to the skilful hind who tills the glebe :
 When, with an eye of equal boast and
 grief, I view the only SON of eternity,
 (born in my very likeness, and not asha-
 med to call me brother,) weep ! suffer ! bleed !
 and die for me ! When I reflect on the
 immortal crown HIS victories intitle me
 to ! how, from very infancy, I was con-
 secrated a living temple for HIS everlast-
 ing

ing abode! I cannot but look upon man, in that light, as a being of dignity, consequence, and power! under whose feet the GOD of nature hath subjected all things, and set him over the works of Hrs hands! even, at present, but little inferior to angels, and speedily to be advanced on a level with the highest!

LORD, What is man, that THOU shouldest magnify him? that THOU shouldest set THINE heart upon him; and visit him every morning *? Interrogatories, certainly, never intended to create in man a mean opinion of *humanity*, but rather to fill him with grateful amazement, at the wonderful power and goodness of Omnipotence! For, if man, by nature, were a low, or scandalous being, it would throw a reflection on DIVINITY, not only for creating, but *magnifying, loving, respecting*, VISITING him. So that, instead of calling it an unbecoming pride, to think highly of *humanity*, let us proclaim it an ignorant

* Job VII. 17, 18.

ignorant injustice to think otherwise. For a proper and thorough contemplation and knowledge of the subject, will prove it a question not to be answered, but by the most exalted notes of self-admiration ! Listen to that great master of nature, the inspired Shakespear ; and hear him, in an explosion of astonishment, delineate the excellence of his nature, in a rapturous strain of heavenly panegyric ! What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! How infinite in faculties ! In form and movement, how express and admirable ! In action, how like an angel ! In apprehension, how like a God ! The beauty of the world ! the parragon of animals ! Thus instructed to reply ; now, let us ask, What is man ? While Christian exultation re-echoes the query, and pursues the thought through a series of reflection, until the soul arrive at a luxury of satisfaction ! What is man ? Why, a being called by ALMIGHTY *Fiat* out of nothing ! raised and enobled by his distinguishing favours on earth, and meant (in-

expressible

expressible honour!) His eternal companion in the joys and glories of the heaven of heavens! A being, in whom the LORD hath pleasure, and in whose praise our GOD hath confessed HIMSELF honoured! Immortal compliment!—Hear it! Glory!—Exult!—Triumph! O! man! and laud and thank thy MAKER with never-ceasing adoration! For the GOD of heaven hath confessed HIMSELF honoured in thy praise! whose general welfare is heaven's peculiar care, and who, henceforth, shall not be called servant, but (O glorious appellation!) FRIEND of the MOST HIGHEST! whom GOD the CREATOR has endowed with capabilities to receive and enjoy His all-gracious favours! From whom the FATHER will not hide the thing which HE doth, and to whom the SON hath made known all which HE hath heard of the FATHER! whom the FATHER hath promised his utmost desire, and whom the SON hath requested to ask, and receive, that his joy may be full! Whom the FATHER so loveth, that

HE

HE gave His only BEGOTTEN to answer for his offences, and for whose redemption the SON has as freely offered up HIMSELF! In whom the HOLY GHOST, the COMFORTER, hath chosen to abide! and whom the THREE GREAT ALMIGHTIES in TRINITY seem to contend, with united emulation, WHICH shall most oblige with the highest marks of their immortal honours!

THIS is to *Know ourselves*; and this is a knowledge will never fail to shew us our duty to GOD, our neighbour, and ourselves. It must, rightly understood, and properly considered, fill our hearts and souls with all the humility, gratitude, love, praise, and adoration, which an happy being can pay its divine CREATOR! and inspire us with that becoming pride, not to do any thing which may stain or debase our exalted *nature*! For how can a man but be humble, who is fully convinced, that himself, and all he possesses, entirely depend on another? And how can he

he chuse but be proud, when he knows, that other is no less than the ALMIGHTY HIMSELF! But then, a knowledge of himself will so moderate that pride, and so support that humility, that he will neither dare to offend his MAKER, by any presumptuous transgression, nor disgrace himself by a mean one.

IT is true, man's immoralities are, in fact, rather owing to a wilful indulgence of his corrupt inclinations, than to any ignorance of his duty. But then, though a want of *knowing himself* may not be the immediate cause of offence; yet a rational portion of that knowledge, operating on the mind, like a lively faith, may be the sure means of avoiding it. Indeed, there be some who go astray with their eyes open, like people who walk in their sleep; but then, those are eyes which the gospel condemns for want of sight; eyes which see not. For I am fully convinced, that a man, who is truly sensible of his obligations to HEAVEN;

his natural worth and dignity ; that reverential respect and moral conduct due and befitting a creature so highly born and endowed, setting DIVINE prohibition and commandment entirely aside, can never live in the practice of sin. I grant you, as man is naturally frail, and not yet arrived to a state of perfection, that the very best of men, and such as have swallowed most of the Tree of Knowledge, may sometimes be surpris'd or provoked, to forget themselves : *Humanum est errare ; et nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit.* It is natural for man to err ; and no one is wise at all times. But then, they will as suddenly recollect and depart from their iniquities ; that is, their transgressions will be more momentary, and less frequent ; and they not only sorry to have displeas'd their Maker, but also ashamed to have demeaned themselves ; not hating sin so much on account of any worldly shame or punishment, or any evil consequence attendant on it here, as because it is offensive to GOD, abominable
in

in *itself*, and unbecoming his own *greatness*. For so odious is sin to GOD, that HE died to destroy it! So frightful in itself, that, as the poet divinely sings, *It need but to be seen to be hated*†; so degrading of man, that, like the charms of Circe, it transforms him to a swine!

WHY, What would you think of a prince, the son and heir of a mighty monarch, whose depravity of taste and manners, instead of enkindling him to a relish of men and exercise suitable to his birth, should scandalize his royalty, by a mean and vicious inclination, to participate the lowest amusements and mingle with the most vulgar associates? And yet there is not a Christian beggar who leads a profligate life, and wallows in vice, but acts more out of character, and puts a greater affront on his manhood; who doth not deviate more from the end of his creation, and more disappoint the expectation of HEA-

.VEN,

† Vice is a monster, of such frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen.

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VEN. For he is born to a crown immortal! has angels for brothers! and the KING of Glory for a Father! his breath of life is the Spirit of GOD! and his body the likeness of his MAKER! And if it be high treason to deface the image of earthly royalty, minted upon dross; what must it be to disfigure the MAJESTY of HEAVEN imprinted on the soul? Why, the most highest * of all high treason thricefold: It is rank rebellion against the KING of KINGS, and is, if we may be allowed the expression, a murder committed on our own immortality!

THUS you see, how essentially necessary, to a capacity of performing his duty, and acquitting himself with that honour and obedience, becoming a child of GOD, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven! it is for a man to *know himself*; a knowledge of more human benefit and import, than
all

* A bold superlative authorized by the Psalmist, who hath more than once distinguished the ALMIGHTY by the style and title of the MOST HIGHEST.

all the learned erudition of the schools! a knowledge which never can grow stale or useless, of equal safety and ornament to angel, as to man; and what had Satan been master of, would, in all probability, have prevented his fall!

The proper study,——
 faith the same immortal bard *.
 ——*of mankind is man.*

BUT then the mistake, as well as the misfortune of it, is, that we study others instead of ourselves. Strange to think! there are in the world able to write an history of all their neighbours, who know little or nothing of themselves; who have eyes like the lynx to spy faults in another, and blind to their own failings, as the Pharisee in the temple: like some travellers, who never having toured their native country, can give a much better account of foreign nations, than the place they were born in: or, like painters, who
 have

* Pope.

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have every one's picture in the drawing-room of their mind, but their own; for that they must fit, and be obliged to another: from prejudice, ignorance, and vanity, so unqualified to portrait their own likeness, that, should they attempt it, nobody would know it but themselves.

LEARN then, O! man, to study *thyself*, and from a knowledge of what thou art, arrive at a capacity of becoming what thou oughtest to be; which, without that knowledge, thou never canst attain; and with that knowledge, it will hardly be possible for thee ever to fail. A due reflection on man's high birth and calling, the beginning and end of his creation, with all their attendant circumstances, will sink into his mind with deeper impression, than the debtor's seal upon his bond; and enforce a punctual observance of the obligation, from the ease of the condition: For man's tenure of HEAVEN is only a pepper-corn a year during life; and who would forfeit so invaluable a title,
for

A MORAL INQUIRY. 27

for so insignificant a rent-charge? Nay, but it is less: For the Christian charter, by which man holds possession of God's immortal grace and favour, only desires him to enjoy a world of blessings; and think with gratitude on the generous BENEFactor. *O! yoke of freedom! O! burthen most light!*

F I N I S.

A MORAL INQUIRY.

THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE OF THE LATE
JOHN RUSSELL, ESQ.
OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.
BY
JAMES RUSSELL, ESQ.
OF THE TEMPLE.



